



Public Safety Communications Highlights

- Good progress has been made on the Eastern Microwave (MW) Installation Project. Crews have completed the installation of MW radios and antennas on the path between the Richland County Law and Justice Center (Zone 2 Controller) and Culbertson. Once path alignments are completed, circuits to trunked sites and to the Master Controller in Helena will be ready for testing and use. The goal is to make this path operational before the end of February.
- Montana's Dept. of Military Affairs performed a successful communications drill on Feb. 14 using the Military Affiliate Radio System (Army MARS), Amateur Radio Auxiliary Communications (AUX COMM) and the 83rd Civil Support Team (CST). According to Lindsey Shafer, DES, the drill tested equipment enhancements that have been made over the past two years. A simulated call was successfully patched from the Governor's office to Fallon County. A message also was transmitted and acknowledged between Helena and FEMA's Mobile Emergency Response Center in Denver.
- The Helena Dispatch Center is now operating from its new location at the Rocky Mountain Emergency Services Training Center near the Helena Airport.

State Agency Radio Users Task Force Meets

On Tues., Jan. 24, Mike Stapp, DES Planning and Preparedness Bureau Chief, briefed State Agency Radio Users Task Force members on a wide variety of issues, including a Communications Exercise scheduled this May that will involve DES, the National Guard, Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) members, Civil Support Team (CST) and others with the goal being to test interoperability between these groups and the State of Montana's equipment and systems. He also reviewed recent progress made on installation of a repeater near Townsend that will help the amateur radio community provide redundant communication that will eventually be tied into the statewide amateur system. In addition, Mike reported that all public safety radios are installed in the DES truck and the code plugs for them are being built at Ft. Mead. This effort should be completed soon.

Members discussed a proposed extension of the Jan. 1, 2013 Narrowband FCC deadline. A bill was

introduced in the Congress late last year to delay implementation; however, it is not likely to be passed. In the meantime, waiver requests from individual jurisdictions are being submitted to the FCC. Public comment is being sought. For more information, visit this [link](#).

Members learned that Maj. Tom Butler, Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), will be chairing a newly developed SIGB Technical Working Group. Gordon Booth, MHP, displayed microwave and trunked radio maps of the statewide public safety communications network along with coverage maps. Gordon described an innovative process for loading inventory data when on site. Interactive maps also are being developed.

Members provided agency updates as follows:

- The Dept. of Corrections (DOC) is in the process of hiring a contractor to help it address radio programming issues.
- MHP has upgraded its dispatch center. Dale Osborne reported that a tower at Ft Harrison appears to be overloaded, causing the loss of signal; so, an engineering study is underway.
- Mike Korn, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, indicated his agency's priorities are on acquiring more XTL 5000 radios and planning for replacement of aging equipment.
- The National Guard has hired a contractor to review armory sites for the purpose of evaluating the need for replacement antennas and coax cables as well as to document HF capabilities. The Guard also is in the process of training a new spectrum manager.
- Sean Gallagher, DNRC, gave a brief update on the Communications Unit Leader (COML) class. He also reported on plans to build a Southern Land Office in Billings, which will be a 2-4 year process. Some of the county communications sites in eastern Montana may be used to help move wildland fire radio traffic.
- Jim DeTienne, DPHHS, reported that his agency still has funding available for another 10 free digital mobile radios for ambulance service companies who have at least half of their staff participate in a one-hour training session on mutual aid radio use. For more information, click on this [link](#).

Ron Spencer, Motorola Solutions, provided updates on trunking sites and indicated that the process of updating the Motorola contract is underway. He also is looking forward to working with Flathead County on the border grant and is interested in continuing discussion on network life-cycle issues. June 1 is the drop dead date for ordering Quantars.

Members decided to have another planning session to discuss an Action Plan for the priorities that the group has been addressing over the past few months. The next meeting is set for Tues., March 27

HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

from 3:00-4:30 pm in Room 160 of the Mitchell Building, located at 125 N. Roberts, in Helena.

SIGB Technical Working Group Meeting

Maj. Tom Butler, Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), is the chair of the newly formed Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) Technical Working Group, which held its first meeting on Tues., Jan. 31 in Helena. The group reviewed a draft Charter and suggested that a Vice Chair position be added as well as additional county and federal representatives.

The group reviewed a list of statewide system priorities that was originally compiled last Nov. Considerable discussion took place regarding the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on the microwave backbone vs. expanding or filling in trunked radio coverage. The group also spent time discussing the current status of the BNSF contract, its expiration date and options that might be available. The statewide system priority list was re-vamped as follows:

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| 1. Operating and maintaining existing sites and equipment | 5. Adding sites |
| 2. Completing the microwave backbone | 6. Re-addressing the BNSF contract |
| 3. Expanding coverage | 7. Narrowbanding |
| 4. Planning | |

It was announced that Angie Mullikin, formally of the Dept. of Transportation, has been selected as the new Homeland Security Grants Manager for DES. The list of needed spare parts for the statewide system has been finalized, which was the first step in applying for grant funds to acquire the parts.

Regular meetings of the SIGB Technical Working Group will be held on the fourth Tues. of the month, starting at 1:00 pm. Location of the meetings will change monthly, but a phone conference bridge will be in place. Minutes will be posted on the SIGB website. The next meeting will be Tues., Feb. 28, at the Flathead County Office of Emergency Services, 625 Timberwolf Parkway, in Kalispell.

Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) Meeting Report

Montana's Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) met on Tues., Feb. 7 in Helena. Jessica Davies, Disaster and Emergency Services (DES) Grant Specialist, provided an update on the status of Homeland Security grant funding programs. Warren Dupuis, the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), directed interested parties to the Dec. 8, 2011 Executive Summary from the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators that is available at this [link](#). The summary provides good information on emerging issues.

Warren also reported on recent meetings with representatives from Aviat Networks and Motorola to

discuss contract issues. In addition, he attended the Feb. 2 Northern Tier meeting in Havre and listened to concerns about the upcoming expiration of the BNSF contract and coverage issues in Lincoln County. Warren indicated that he has contacted multiple stakeholder organizations about having a representative serve on the SIGB Legislative Working Group, and letters of invitation will be sent soon. Beaverhead County Commissioner Mike McGinley will be chairing the group. Its first meeting will be on Feb. 23 in Helena.

Carl Hotvedt, State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD), gave an update on local projects, indicating that Richland County completed the infrastructure build out with DHS FY07 funds and Broadwater County completed training exercises in Flathead, Hill and Roosevelt Counties as well as the Blackfeet Nation. Corrective action reports have been issued to help those jurisdictions improve. Progress is being made on the DHS FY08 grant to complete the microwave backbone from Culbertson to Miles City. Crews have been able to complete much of the indoor work as well as install radios and antennas at multiple sites. The grant expiration date of April, 2012 presents a critical challenge for outside work during winter weather. Carl also said that NEPA applications are being submitted for the Border Demonstration grant.

Tom Butler, Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), reported on the SIGB Technical Working Group, which met on Jan. 31. He emphasized the need to have a clear direction for the future of statewide communications system. Roger Smith, Lewis and Clark County, gave a technical report on the microwave system.

The next SIGB meeting is set for Tues., March 13 in Room 152 of the State Capitol beginning at 10:00 am. Agenda items should be provided to Warren Dupuis or Dick Clark.

SIGB Updated on Trunking, Narrowbanding

Scott Bradford, Public Safety Services Bureau, gave a review of narrowbanding and trunking usage issues at the recent meeting of the Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB).

He reported that the state has 32 active trunking sites in 15 counties, 6 of which are currently operating in "site trunking" due to intermittent microwave or Master Zone Control issues. He reviewed a list of trunking utilization issues and outlined risks and concerns facing the system. His presentation slides are available [here](#).

In addition, Scott gave an update on narrowbanding, explaining how FCC licenses can be updated with no frequency coordination or fees if changes to coverage, power, location or other operational details are not being made and the last

HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

three digits of emission information on the license remains the same. PSSB is offering free support in this area. Public safety agencies may contact [Julia Noland](#) (406-444-0162) or [Scott Bradford](#) (406-444-2782) with questions. Scott also presented results of an informal assessment of narrowbanding needs in Montana that was conducted at the end of 2010. His presentation is linked [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings

- **Tues., Feb. 28: State Agency Radio Users Task Force Meeting**

Helena • 3:00 - 4:30 pm
Mitchell Building, 125 N. Roberts, Rm. 160

- **Tues., Feb. 28: SIGB Technical Working Group**

Kalispell • 1:00 - 4:30 pm
Flathead County Office of Emergency Services
625 Timberwolf Parkway

- **Tues., March 13: Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB)**

Helena • 10:00 am - noon
State Capitol, Room 152
http://itsd.mt.gov/policy/councils/sigb/03132012_meeting.mcp

- **March 7, 9, 12 & 14: DES Grant Writing Workshops for Local Government:**

- **Wed., March 7** • Glendive • 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Dawson Community College, Community Room

- **Fri., March 9** • Billings • 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Rm. 105, Yellowstone County Courthouse,
217 North 27th Street

- **Mon., March 12** • Missoula • 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Northern Rockies Training Ctr., Bob Marshall Room
5765 West Broadway

- **Wed., March 14** • Great Falls • 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Cascade County EOC, 521 1st Avenue NW
Contact: Marschal Rothe, Training Coordinator, DES
mrothe@mt.gov or (406) 324-4776

- **Thurs.-Fri., March 15 &/or 16: Homeland Security Exercise & Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Training**

Billings • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily
Fire Station #1, 2300 9th Ave. North

Note: These are two one-day sessions. March 15 is an overview on Exercise Design and the HSEEP Toolkit. March 16 focuses on Exercise Design with a practicum.

Contact: Lindsey Shafer, HSEEP Coordinator, DES;
lshafer@mt.gov or 406-324-4780



State of Montana offices will be closed on Monday, Feb. 20, to commemorate President's Day